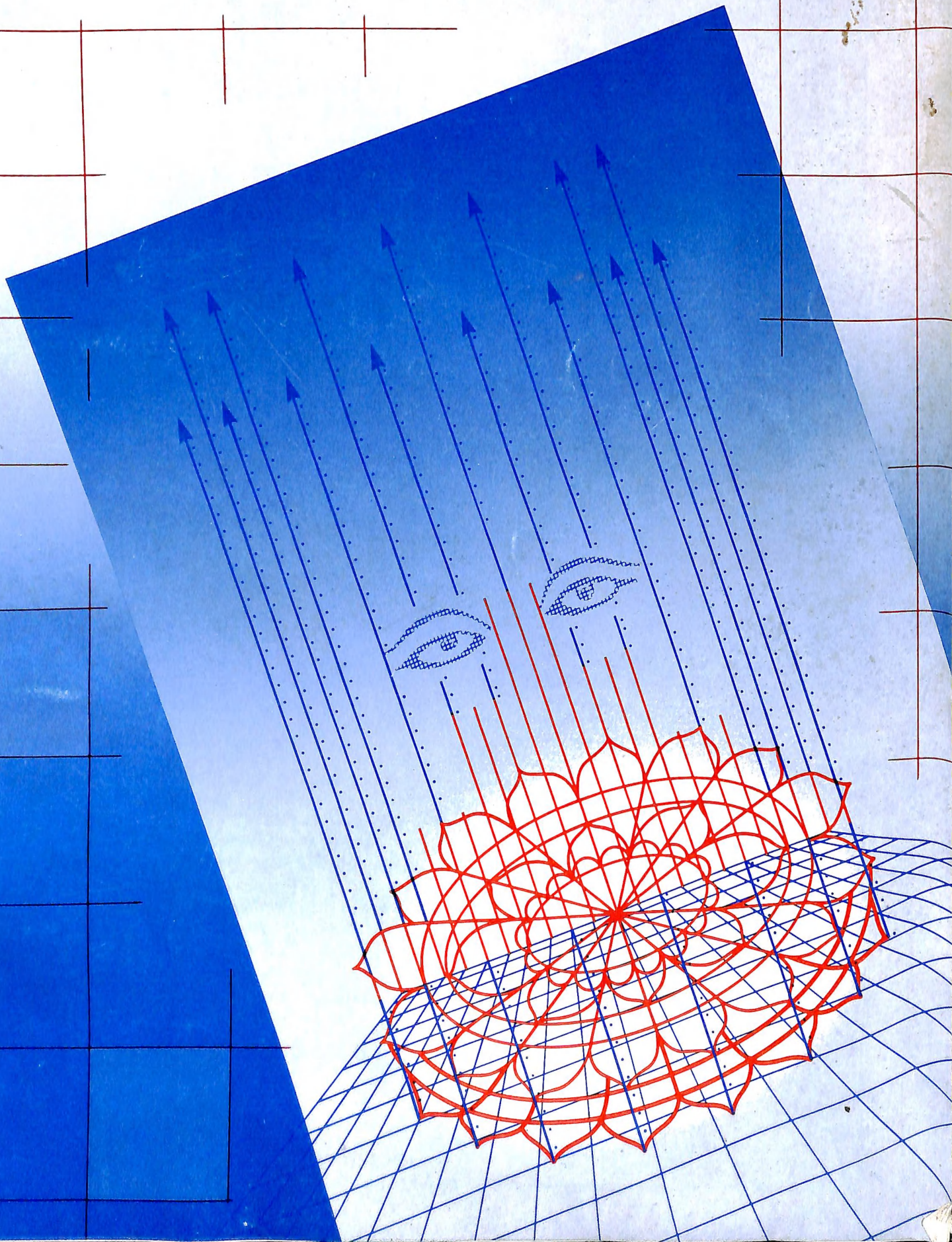


Rudra



NITYANANDA INSTITUTE

The Nityananda Institute, headquartered in Cambridge, Massachusetts, is a non-profit center dedicated to the active practice of a spiritual life. Named for the Indian saint who is its wellspring and inspiration, the Institute is under the direction of Swami Chetanananda, an American spiritual master in the tradition of Kashmir Shaivism. The presence of this living teacher and the opportunity for sustained contact with him gives the Institute its unique character.

The Institute sponsors many programs, ranging from a full residential program to quarterly Retreat weekends to courses in hatha yoga. The heart of the practice is the daily kundalini yoga meditation program in Cambridge which is open to occasional and regular visitors alike, after completion of the Introductory Program. And for information and study, the Institute's Rudra Press offers a fine selection of translated texts and contemporary spiritual writing.

FRIENDS

FRIENDS of the Nityananda Institute is the fundraising apparatus that helps support the programs and activities of the Nityananda Institute. Your financial contributions, volunteer work, or in-kind donations directly affect the Institute's ability to serve you, and are always gratefully received. If you wish to contribute to FRIENDS and receive a quarterly Newsletter detailing current and proposed projects, please send your tax-deductible donation to: NI/Friends, P.O. Box 1973, Cambridge, MA 02238.

ABOUT THE COVER

A striking blend of ancient and modern symbolism centered on a unique perspective view of a mandala, this cover is the result of many conversations between designer Bonnie Rieser and Swami Chetanananda.



The Nityananda Institute® logo is styled after a photograph of the young Nityananda, c. 1930.

RUDRA

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FROM THE EDITOR

In thinking about this issue and its theme of renewal, it occurs to me that there is a real difference between change and renewal. Change is a constant element in our lives (if you will forgive the apparent contradiction), yet not all change is at the same time renewal. Certainly some changes are: often when we face something new – a new project at work, making a new friend, even reading a new issue of our favorite magazine – we feel refreshed, stimulated, invigorated by the encounter. There's something special about it; it perks us up. Perhaps the difference is not in the change itself, but in our attitude toward it: renewal is what results from meeting life's changes in a positive spirit. When we face the inevitable changes openly, with a willingness to release the old and welcome the new, renewal is possible.

In the context of a spiritual practice, renewal is both our goal and our daily experience. At the Nityananda Institute we experience renewal on many levels, and pay homage to its profound impact on our lives at many points during the year. As this issue comes out, we are celebrating both the birthday of our teacher, Swami Chetanananda, and *Guru Purnima*, the traditional Indian celebration of the Teacher. Both, for us, signal the end of one cycle and the beginning of another, and this moment in mid-summer embodies the very essence of renewal.

Swamiji's central article in this issue of *Rudra* is based on a talk given as winter turned into spring, and begins by noting the anniversary of the passing of his teacher, Swami Rudrananda (Rudi). On this framework he discusses three keys to spiritual renewal. Primary among them is learning to deal with the tensions of our life. The excerpts from Rudi's book *Spiritual Cannibalism* complement Swamiji's article by revealing an exceptionally powerful and direct teaching on breaking through tension to experience renewal from within.

Several other pieces take up this thread by discussing positive ways to deal with the tensions of our life – in particular, Rachel Gaffney's clear and simple first-person account of applying spiritual work in daily life, and Sharon Ward's descriptions of hatha yoga postures that can help break through the tensions locked in our bodies.

Many other treats surround our thematic centerpiece. A poem by Connie Dyer conveys beautifully the magic inherent in the encounter of student and Teacher. Gene Bernardin's talk about the student/teacher relationship articulates several important qualities that any serious student would be well-advised to cultivate. And Aurelia Navarro's article about wellness incorporates conversations with several Institute physicians concerning the role of spirituality in a holistic approach to wellness.

Incidentally, you may notice a new look to our magazine. With this issue, now expanded to twenty-four pages, we have modified the design and added new department headings, soliciting articles from many new authors along the way. As always, we would love to hear from you. We hope you like the revitalized format and find that it successfully mirrors the spirit of inner renewal inspired by its content.

THE EDITOR

Drawing: Shiva as Nataraja, Lord of Dance. Shiva dances in ecstasy to the eternal tunes of the cosmos. The dance itself represents the activity of Shiva as the source of the universe.

Lineage is a flow of grace that transcends time and space.

NITYANANDA

Nityananda lived in southwest India from the late 1800s to 1961. Over the years, he attracted thousands to the remote jungle village of Ganeshpuri. Why did they come? Certainly not because it was easy, since conditions were harshly primitive, and Nityananda rarely spoke. They came simply to be in his presence, and they were satisfied.

Such a holy man is called an *avadhut* in Sanskrit – a living miracle of pure consciousness in human form. Timeless and eternal, the *avadhut* is a direct link to the Absolute, containing all teachers who went before him and all who follow. The grace of the *avadhut* Nityananda flows in our lineage.

RUDI

One of the thousands who visited Ganeshpuri was Rudi. Born in Brooklyn in 1928, Rudi had long been actively pursuing spiritual development when he went to India in 1958 and had the meeting with Nityananda that changed the course of his life. Returning to New York, he continued his flourishing Oriental art business while teaching thousands of students in the U.S. and Europe.

One of the first Americans to be recognized as a Swami, Rudi was a totally new spiritual manifestation: a fiery fusion of East and West whose only interest was the inner transformation of growth and transcendence.

SWAMI
CHETANANANDA

Born in Kentucky in 1948, Chetanananda went to New York to meet Rudi in 1971 and immediately knew that this was his teacher. After Rudi passed away, Chetanananda became head of the ashram organization Rudi had begun. In 1978 he was initiated as a Swami, formalizing his unwavering commitment to spiritual growth.

The opportunity for an immediate, personal relationship with a true teacher is a rare treasure. Swamiji, a thoroughly contemporary American, provides the living link to the timeless lineage that flowed through Nityananda and Rudi.

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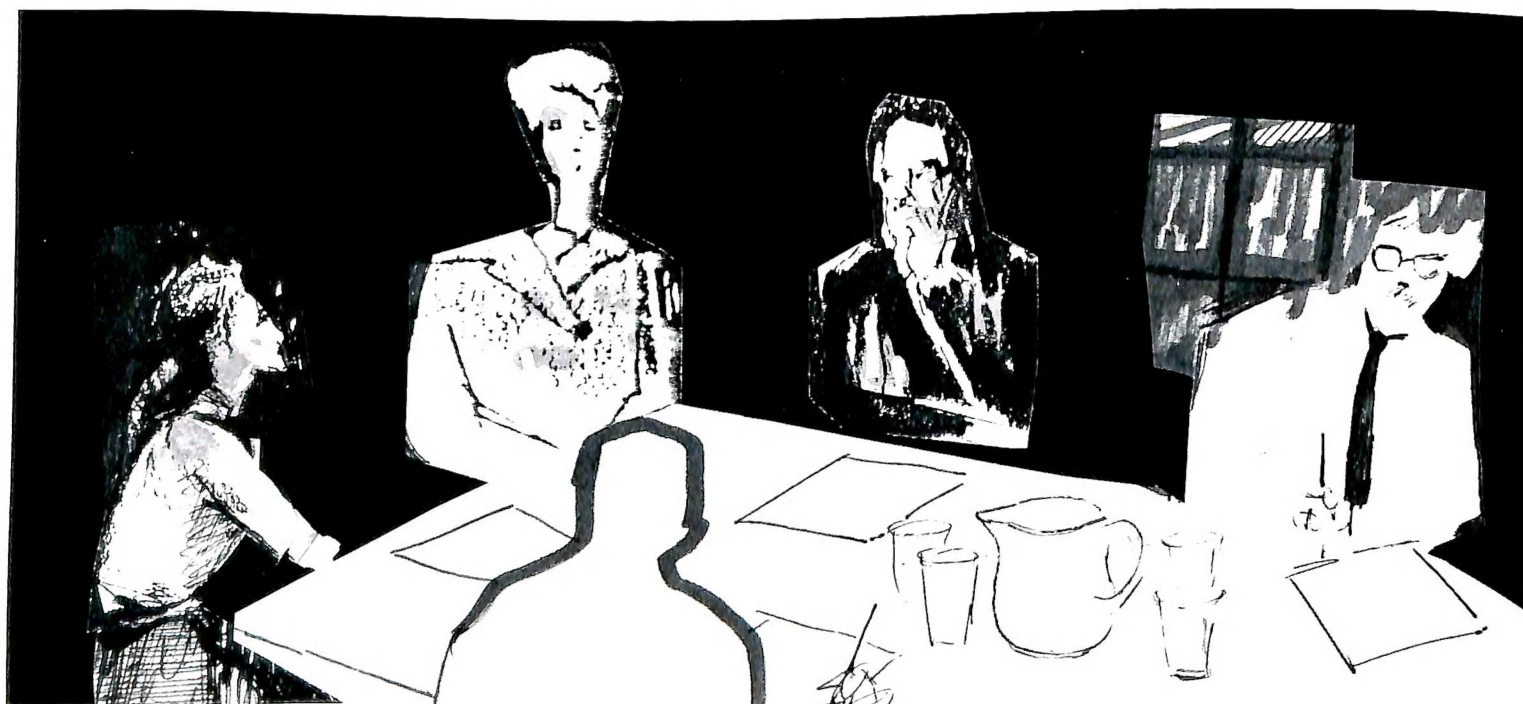
SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

Does it Work at Work?

by RACHEL GAFFNEY

The five of us sit around an oblong oak table. The room is slightly humid, though it is the dead of winter. The corners of the window have steamed up. At the far end of the table sits a silver-haired man who fidgets unceasingly in his chair. To his right sits a young woman with an ashen complexion, impeccably dressed. To his left sit two professors in their early forties, one of whom is talking in a rapid staccato. I sit at the other end of the table. In the center are a pile of blank white pads, a cache of razorpoint Bic pens, and a frosted pitcher of water. No one has taken a drink.

We have been meeting for two hours. In that time the woman with the ashen complexion and the silver-haired man have lost their tempers with each other six times. I am keeping count; it's part of my job. The staccato talker plays the nervous umpire. Two strikes, one ball. This only aggravates the others even more. The second professor plays with his pen and coughs awkwardly. I take notes, marking a small slash in the margin of my paper for every personal comment. Through the whole two hours, the tension never really goes away. It shifts from one corner of the room to another like a bad smell no one can quite identify or locate.



Institute Member Rachel Gaffney, former editor of ReVision journal, is currently a Research Assistant at MIT.

ILLUSTRATION: NANCY OSTROVSKY

By the seventh round of temper loss, everyone is feeling agitated. The argument touches sensitive spots for each party; quite a lot of money stands to be lost, either the old gentleman or the young woman will lose face, and the agitated young professor could lose his job. I also have something at stake. The results of the meeting will greatly influence my chances for acceptance in a master's degree program.

Somewhere outside a bus wheezes around a corner. I look up from my paper and over the climbing steam at the bottom of the window. I look across the yard to where two men are cleaning windows on the towers of the engineering building. Suddenly an odd relief bubbles up inside me. I lean forward in my chair, draw my chest up, and take a deep breath. It occurs to me that nothing in this room has anything to do with anything except energy. I can feel my forehead soften and my brain creak with relief. A couple of phrases that I've heard in talks at the Institute come to mind. I look again for the pattern of my breath. I study again the energy in my legs, arms, heart, and belly. I laugh a little at myself for falling down again, having to pick myself up and brush off my knees; I wonder why and how I can slip so far on dry land. From across the room the old man stops to look in my direction. He is quiet now, waiting for some unresolved point to be debated. I look up at him a little bemused, feeling oddly warm toward him. I begin to suspect that it's my turn to talk. I am at a loss for words. All that comes to mind is, "Well, thank God for this."



If you take the simple question "How do you use your spiritual practice in your work in the world," you can come up with a wide range of answers. I will divide mine into three areas: physical, philosophical, and gut, or heart. By physical I mean the concrete breath and posture practice that I pull out to bring me into balance. It is analogous to the moves of a martial artist – stored somewhere in the overlapping zone of mind/body, ready to be called out if the situation demands it. By philosophical I mean the combined power of the intellectual teaching Swamiji (Swami Chetan-ananda) passes on to us in the form of talks and informal discussions plus the philosophical tradition of Kashmir Shaivism. While there is no way to render the mystical to the intellect, there are ways to tap

the power of ideas to access the mystical. Finally, by the heart I mean love.



PHYSICAL

For seven years I have sat almost every night for an hour simply paying attention to my breath. Inhaling, exhaling, inhaling, exhaling. Watching the patterns of energy engaged by the breathing. Pulling my attention again and again into my abdomen. In those hours I've felt the entire spectrum of emotions – contentment, joy, frustration, pain, discomfort, boredom, and humor. They have come and gone and exacted their prices. To the extent that I've been able to duck them, I've seen through their transparency. To the

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extent that I've succumbed to them, I've been at their mercy. But the simple fact that every night I open the store, let in whatever customers might come, and commit myself to working at this process night after night – this is the most important aspect of the whole routine. If I sit in meditation and feel discomfort, I work at my breath. If I feel anger, I work at my breath. If I feel distraction, I work at my breath. Again and again I discover the only way to break through these emotions, the only way to gain freedom from them, is through the ceaseless return to the breath.

For want of a better definition, I will call this the gross physical work of the practice. Because it is so embedded in a meditation practice, it becomes natural to rely on it when things get emotional at work or

in a relationship. The moment I feel pain, the first thing I do is breathe deeply. The moment I see the tension mounting in someone I work with, I relax the muscles of my abdomen. Over the years the power of this remedy has grown. I have seen it drain the tension out of heated situations in a broad range of contexts. I have watched Swamiji do it and take the tension out of a whole room. And while there's a mechanical aspect to it, there's something magical to it as well. Its power is immense.



PHILOSOPHICAL

The first time I came to the Institute, I understood little of what meditation was. Mostly it was a struggle, and slightly bewildering. Nonetheless, from that first day, from the very first talk I listened to, I appreciated the wisdom and insight of what is taught there. It is common sense, strong, honest. Since that first day I have listened to hundreds of talks. Each of them has had a different flavor, creating in me a different ambience. Yet each has been (sometimes in backhanded ways) a remarkable source of nourishment. The experience of many of them is as though someone had taken you up instantaneously into a helicopter from where you could view the earth – suddenly the heat of your struggle vanishes in the larger context. You are drawn back and away.

I have used these talks in many ways. First, I have simply remembered something striking in the heat of the moment (or in the dull of a moment...). The words have a power to pull me back from doing something I might later regret. They have given lightheartedness to heavy-handed situations. They have bolstered the physical connection to a greater power in moments when I had the most need.

Each of us has examples of this from our own experience. Something someone says strikes us powerfully and we think of that phrase often for a few weeks. It's useful. My experience has been the same, perhaps more frequent by virtue of my association with the Institute. It is as though I live next door to an art museum that I must pass through to get to my room at night. Each night something different on the walls strikes me as lovely, heartfelt. Each night the lighting is different, the angle that catches my eye is singular. Throughout the day I remember one color, one painted face, and in it find the inspiration to go forward.

For seven
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THE HEART

To talk about how you use the love that comes from a spiritual practice in the world is awkward. I don't think you can use love. I'm not sure you can even really talk about love. From what I can tell, it's because of love that anything happens at all – it underlies action, motivation, and effort. The problem is not how to use it or even how to talk about it, but how to get in touch with it in contexts you consider unloving – at a business meeting, at the sink, at a final exam. Once you can feel it, there's little need to talk about it, and usually little need to talk at all.

Having said that, there are a few particulars I might add from my own experience. If, in a situation I'm resisting, I can for just *one second* feel love in my heart, I can be free of the struggle of resistance. If I desire something that counters the fabric of my life, and if (by some stroke of luck or grace) I can open my heart enough to remember the love in my life, the desire slinks away. When that love comes over you (and sometimes you have to ask and ask and ask), nothing can touch you, nothing can pull you down. Now, if you add the love within you to the love surrounding you, you have an abundance that gives a whole different shade to things. You become like a laborer who works outside under the sun but has a huge cooler of fresh lemonade with him at all times. It's effort, but it's nothing you can't do. With that love, you're equipped to face whatever crosses your way – you recognize there's nothing to fear, no, you really *feel* there's nothing to fear, so you can just go forward.



THE TEACHER

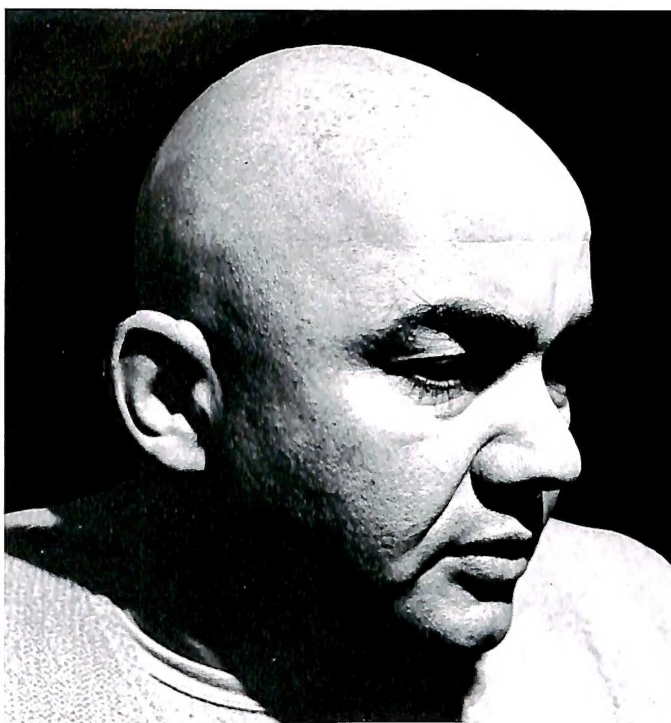
The teacher is the foundation of all this. Without the teacher we wouldn't have the Institute, the structure of morning and evening meditation, instruction in breath and hatha yoga, or the potent talks. Without the teacher, the love in our lives would, I suspect, be considerably more fragmented and elusive. And, while

these things are wealth enough in themselves, they are small tokens compared to the enormity of what you learn by association with a teacher.

Do you use a teacher when you apply a spiritual practice to the world? No and yes. No, it is no more possible to use a teacher than it is to use love. Yes, you must use a teacher. You must study him (or her) closely; you must watch for the deftness of his actions, the largess with which he deals with people. I have come to feel there is no better (and perhaps no other) way to learn. I have seen Swamiji deal with countless situations of awkwardness and stress. I have seen him landed with disappointing circumstances, with grieving individuals, with confusing and difficult outcomes. I have watched him quietly accept the unsavory jobs he is called on to do without rejection or scorn or hesitation. I have seen the elegance of his timing, the endurance of his patience. I have seen his commitment to his goals against all odds. I have watched his humor break tension again and again. And I have never, in my whole experience with him, seen him put his self-interest above the interests of others. Never.

These ways of being are very subtle. I don't know how else you learn how to live them but by watching someone who is really good at it. It's like a music student studying under a great maestro – there is no substitute for being in that presence, observing with humility, taking the subtleties into your blood. Further, because the road we are walking on has surprising bends and lengthy uphill climbs, I don't know how you keep inspired without someone in front of you showing you that it's worth it – that putting the heart first really works.

Throughout the course of my life, I've met and worked closely with people of remarkable strength and character. Some have been great intellectuals, some have been artists attuned to the sensual and physical levels of living. Others have been philosophers and students of the cognitive sciences. Many of them are recognized for the caliber of their work, and some have positions of power and visibility. Each has extracted wisdom from the depth of his insight into his field. But of all these, I have met only one or two who balance body, head, and heart, and only one who lives exclusively in that balance. It is delicate and subtle, and so accomplished only because of a great devotion. It comes from grace and manifests as grace. When one attains that state, as Swamiji has done, any separation between one's spiritual practice and one's work in the world no longer exists. It's all work, and it's all God. ■



Breaking Patterns of TENSION

Rudi

Through work, surrender, association with a teacher, and a deep inner effort, we can transform tension into fuel for growth.

HUMAN BEINGS, from the day of their birth, live in a sack of tension which it is almost impossible for them to break through. This tension is a psychic quantity which has to be taken in by someone who loves them and who is willing to absorb the tensions that represent the karma of this life. Not dealing with this tension builds an illusionary existence.

The ability of a teacher to take the entire psyche of a student within himself frees the student of the many problems which he cannot resolve. It is this decrystallization, the breaking of bonding that holds us to patterns, that frees us to evolve as spiritual beings.

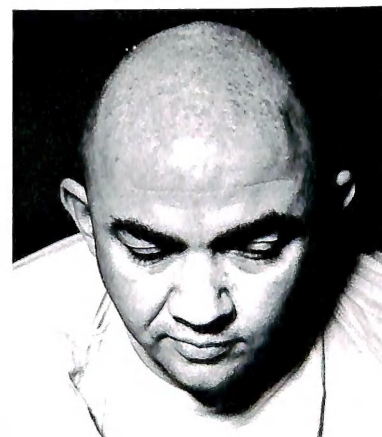
FIRST YOU MUST realize that there is the dimension of ordinary life and the dimension of extraordinary life. These dimensions require different muscle and nervous systems. You must strengthen those muscles which carry spiritual energy. They have to be used and exercised until they are strong enough to support the flow of energy that constitutes a spiritual life. Just as a child learning to walk is supported by his parents, so too a spiritual child requires the support of his teacher so that his development will be healthy and natural. Trying to force development will cause the novice to be crippled spiritually, his mechanism twisted. It is essential to separate the mind and emotions from the psyche as they are of different dimensions.

YOU EVOLVE from your physical to your spiritual potential by overcoming the resistance that blocks you when surrendering yourself during the exercise. Crystallization, or the bonding that holds us to patterns, breaks down. Surrender washes out chemistry freed by crystal change. Having new chemistry, we have to perform differently.

WHEN A PERSON'S work approaches a critical point, his emotions begin to plague him. The revolt within is the struggle of the emotional and psychic forces to maintain their balance. The surrender during this stressful period begins to expose a person's wrong life patterns. As they become exposed they are threatened with complete extinction. The threatened destruction results from an explosion of higher consciousness, what we call enlightenment, which reveals the true nature of the experience. This explosion is the only method that can effect a change. Because people's mechanisms are fairly insensitive, only through explosive revelation can they be shaken into awareness. After many dramatic explosions we begin to understand and relax, secure that what changes is good and will not be unbearable. The more sensitive and highly developed person, who has worked for long periods of time on his inner development, yields again and again to inner and outer pressures.

ANY SITUATION that builds tension shuts off a person's spiritual life. Tension keeps man on a physical dimension. During those periods when you cannot separate yourself from your tensions you are totally earthbound. This unfortunately causes you to attract from this lower level and increases your inability to rise spiritually. Continual approach to spiritual work with unresolved tensions will result in a low level of psychic function.

The exercise of surrender is essential at all times



before actual work can commence. Many people try to work without properly letting go of emotional tensions and mental activity. If there is no surrender, there can be no separation between the physical and the psychic selves, and no preparation for receiving the spiritual force. In no occupation can a nervous, preoccupied man do a good job. A medical doctor learns to control his mind and emotions while operating. Every highly trained man must do the same. Yet, in spiritual work, people believe they can bring a mind full of garbage to the job and achieve good results. Discipline is essential to work.

SPIRITUAL WORK is based on the ability to consciously surrender continually deeper so that the psychic system can emerge and separate from the physical self. Continual effort is essential, as the process never becomes automatic. After many years of work, recurring patterns appear. When you work each day you become more and more aware of your tensions, and thus more able to relax. Your psychic system surfaces faster, and eventually can function on a twenty-four hour basis. As it lives more, the psychic self demands more. The student will find that he turns to it normally and naturally. Changing behavior patterns will reveal this.

In the advanced student, tensions are broken down as the psychic system begins to transmit messages to the brain. As a living system it develops needs. If these needs are not satisfied it reminds the student he must use his exercise to relax. The more energy entering you, the more you can afford to open and have and evolve. It is a new function within the student, and the student must have the understanding that his inner work must be used more and more in his ordinary life.

PEOPLE WHO are aspiring to evolvment and higher consciousness should be actively engaged in life and business as much as possible so that the increase in capacity for doing can be used in all situations. The attempt to raise the spiritual inner man under rarefied conditions produces a quantity which will not survive under ordinary conditions of life. It will be a rare, exotic plant of no use to a creative life. Exposure to the full gamut of conditions will destroy it. If your growth withstands these tests, you will be fit to survive the pressures of the heights attained through enlightenment.

To become continually more conscious enables you to raise the level of your life. Your ability to earn more money and assume more responsibility, which increases your sensitivity and creativity in all areas, are qualities which draw you more into the world and attract the world to you. The serenity, wisdom, and happiness which are the qualities of an enlightened man certainly deserve to bring him tribute on all levels. He must also be able to exist above the tensions these responsibilities attract. This gives him the vitality to transfer the life force. Tension and energy are essential together as tension creates the container and energy the content.

IT IS A SIGN OF a working man to be always deeply at work converting life experiences into enlightenment. A monk in a monastic order might contemplate a rarefied experience five hundred times and glory in each glimmer. A man who is working should be too full of experiences to find time for recording them as they occur.

Work is for the breaking down of what we are and all the experiences we have in a state of surrender. It is as if the experiences were fuel and the surrender a furnace. Feeding our experience into the furnace produces the heat of evolvment. As the feeding continues the raw material becomes a more refined product which produces greater heat. The enlightenment, this heat, must also be surrendered to result in the building within of a psychic system.

THE NATURE of energy is that it gets stronger as we rise from the physical to the spiritual level. There are fewer tensions and a great vastness to draw from. It is like a V shape (a cyclone) and we are on the bottom. As it rises the expansion on the top increases and the tension lessens. Also, as we rise we are farther from the two external lines of tension which contain this vastness. The higher up in this V shape we come, the greater the movement. The nature of energy is that it flows faster with fewer tensions around it. The volume of energy also speeds the velocity of the flow. As you reach into Time and Space, the flow of energy is faster; as a result, the outer conditions of the world around you seem to move with great speed.

Many people in public life or in high positions in business or professional life understand this principle to some degree. It is essential for anyone working with higher energies to in no way be involved with petty detail, as this acts as tension which slows down the flow. A weak person does his job below the tension of a situation. A strong person makes new rules and frees himself from the obsolete restrictions placed upon him.

It is the same thing in spiritual work. We work and learn with everyone else's restrictions and tensions. If you have the capacity to grow, you break these tensions, but only by being free in the sense that you can transcend them and function better than somebody else can with these restrictions. A revolution is of no help if it imposes restrictions that bring about more tension than those which have been removed. Transcending one level should not bring restrictions to force a person to a lesser level in any area of his life.

A GREAT DEAL of the effort in learning is given to surrender so that there is no internal conflict during the assimilation process. In the very act of relating one takes a psychological stand in which the results are predictable. If a student finds himself always approaching his teacher in an argumentative state, he should leave, or else a long and unfruitful relationship may develop. To assume the position of student is to approach someone you credit with a quality you desire. By surrender you allow information and energy to be transmitted.

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WE ARE SEPARATED from our spiritual life by layers and layers of tension. Laziness and dreams do not make for evolvment. Work, hard work, is the essential ingredient.

A MAN WHO does not engage in disciplined work cannot develop. This natural law has nothing to do with morally good or bad behavior. The spiritual purpose of work is to break down your chemistry, to transform your thickness into a field ripe for creativity. Often you work until you come up against resistance. There you stop. Yet this is the very time you should work through your resistance. The seed in you lives and grows in that material which is broken down during the conscious work process. It is spiritual soil, which holds the continual refining energy as you evolve.

THE POINT OF inner work is to bring the ordinary consciousness of surrender to the mind in everyday life and in all activities. A man who surrenders within his spiritual self but does not surrender within his physical self is only going through the sensation of surrender. Surrender is the total letting go of everything in a human being on all levels of his existence.

TO PUT A NEW idea into effect, one must be given added energy. To rehabilitate an alcoholic, he is given vitamins. To help a man grow spiritually, he is given a teacher. Christ said, "I give you my blood to drink and my flesh to eat." This is nourishment any teacher must provide to put into effect the new ideas he presents. To work, any teaching must have within it the vital ingredient of life — a living creative force which is transferable.

A TRULY GREAT teaching, like a truly great teacher, is of such simplicity that the student's first encounter with it produces the immediate impression that it has always existed. To enter into truth one should have the realization that it is a fulfillment, that it is timeless, that it is infinite in quality and quantity. It should require no analysis. A person who finds truth and seeks to destroy it by analysis reveals his insecurity. One must learn how to hold on to the miracle that is at once apparent on first meeting. One must understand that this moment is a gift given to the seeker as a reference point for any tension subsequently found within.

WE HAVE AN illusion that we can exercise our own will for our own end. The entire concept of spirituality is submission of your will to a teacher as well as to a philosophy or religion. Many times, against tremendous resistance, the student submits and then the energy connection occurs which makes for a rebirth. It is particularly difficult for willful or stubborn people to allow this to occur. The defensiveness of the mind is unbelievable, and many people who make efforts and pay the full price of time and energy do not succeed. It is the deep unconscious which prevents

this marriage of energies, or crossbreeding, from taking place. It is the inability of the person to submit to anybody or anything. It is the primitive resistance of a primitive human being.

I have taught for over twenty years and find it a recognizable quality, as there are certain characteristics which exhibit themselves in the personality. They are frustrated by their own sense of value. People feel superior to the situation and deeply resent submitting or being a student. They usually feel they have an ability to teach and always fight for a minor position, such as teacher or apprentice, that puts them above the level of a student.

It is like a prize fighter who never stays down for the count of ten. He gets up continually and gets his brains knocked out. A deep inner pride allows him, in his own mind, to feel he has never been beaten. To truly surrender is not only to be beaten but to not care. It is not within the capacity of a weak ego to ever give in. A real human being is one who will die for what he believes, and because he will die, he has the potential of being a true vehicle through which God can work. When people do not have the inner security to completely submit, it reflects their own will and their inability to truly accept God's will to work through them.

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time and energy do
not succeed.**

THE GREATEST thing that you can do is to really ask in your heart to be open so that you can surrender to God. If you can't have the dramatic experience of your heart opening to this wish for your creative growth, then all the work you do in the future will be superficial. It does not matter how much you work, how long you work, or the sacrifices that you make; unless the effort springs from a deep conscious surrender, all the energy you put in and all the effort you make will not become deep nourishment. If this deep conscious opening and wish to grow does not exist, the result will be superficial and unproductive.

A MAN WHO does not open within himself to the greatest depth possible, and continue to expand the effort, is like the man in the parable of the sower throwing the seed on the rock. Every effort for a human being is internal and in depth. A deep conscious effort will bring results.

DEPTH IS THE most important element for growth. Once you have achieved depth it is easy to broaden the area of surrender by relaxing at that point. With relaxation, the force will move outward. It is only tension and holding on with the mind that limit the scope of a deep experience. Our lack of imagination continually stops us. To achieve a truly deep experience, you must go beyond the imagination. Relax and allow the energy to enter deeply within, visualizing to be sure it spreads. It requires time to learn how to do this. When you finally reach some level of success in spiritual work and find a result, it is not time to stop. Why limit your work? One miracle usually follows another and results inspire new impetus. Much is lost by the inability of students to understand this principle. Strike when the iron is hot and keep striking. ■



*A hundred faces look from yours into mine
each as new to
as this one before me*

*To discover in
something*

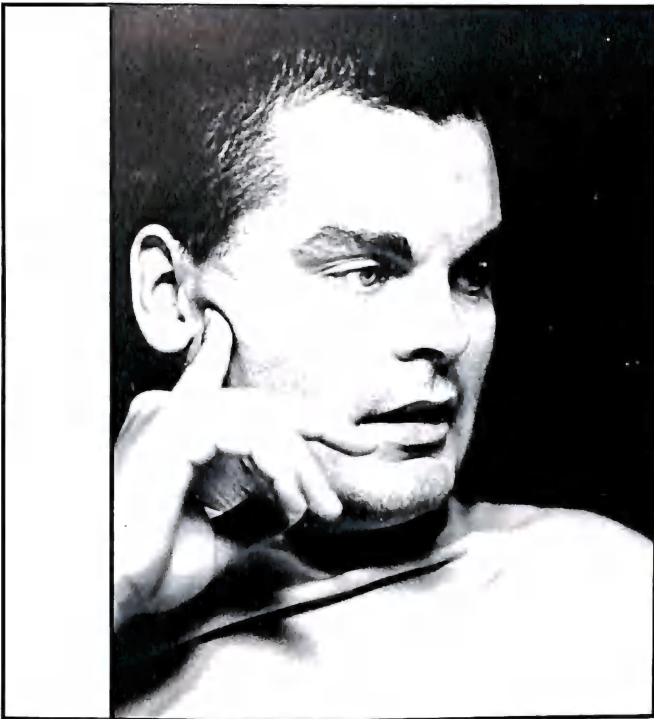
*to love to lo
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STAGES OF RENEWAL

The Role of Tensions,
Trust, and Service

—
Swami Chetanananda

Renewal means a continuous rediscovery of the meaning and depth of our lives; it means recognizing both the profoundly transitory nature of all form and the complete unity of matter and energy.

THE RETURN OF THE LIGHT in the springtime awakens the earth and encourages nature to renew itself, to begin again the process of unfolding its inner creative content. Spring is a time when we think of renewal in our lives. Interestingly, it is also when we commemorate Rudi's passing and the profoundly transitory nature of everything that we love and care about. We have to recognize that each season must move on, and that this renewal gives way to another renewal and another and another. What gives ultimate value to the experience of life is our ability to be nourished by all experiences and, from deeply within ourselves, to attain the highest state.

Fourteen years ago today, when Rudi passed away, the dawn and the sunset converged into one moment. I'm reminded that the Jews consider the new day to begin at sunset. Certainly that's true for us, too; Rudi's passing was the end of one day in our lives and the beginning of a new day. And even though it was in some ways a dark period, it was also the beginning of an extraordinary renewal.

This renewal means a continuous rediscovery of the meaning and depth that exists in our lives. It is the only road to permanent happiness, and that means we must deal with tensions, because dealing with tensions is the union of our everyday experience and divine occurrence. It is the union of problem and solution. It is the release of tremendous energies which nurture and nourish and strengthen us until we are able to connect to and experience and accept direct insight into the nature of Life Itself, direct insight into the nature of God.

Dealing with tensions enables us to understand that the creative energy of Life Itself has a will of its own which does not correspond to (and only rarely and gratuitously intersects) the concepts that we harbor in our heads about where our life is going and what we might like to see happen along the way. This is very important. It's very important to learn that life has a will of its own and we are just an organization of elements here for the purpose of enjoying the ride.

DEALING WITH TENSIONS

The primary manifestation of the beginning of an important period of renewal is the presence of very powerful tensions. These tensions are simply a crystallized form of energy – the same energy which at other times manifests as the teacher, as learning, as growing. Their presence should cause us to be aware also of the presence of God, and the presence, therefore, of grace. Dealing with strong energies is not a process of dealing with problems. It is a process of discovering extraordinary opportunities for growth and change. It is a process of unfolding from within the field of our life exactly what we need, exactly the resources we require, to attain the highest state of understanding available to a human being.

Encountering and releasing strong energies requires a two-fold capability. One is your own inner effort to stay relaxed, keep an open mind, and be non-judgmental. The other is the skill to flow with another person or situation. Instead of reacting to an event by first closing up in yourself (the physical layer of the situation) and then (the second layer) becoming emotional and spewing this strong energy all over the place, thereby feeding the misunderstanding, you connect to the strong energy and open yourself to it. It flows within you, you flow within it; and because you are thoughtful and careful, you will learn something important about yourself in these moments. You will also learn something important about the situation you are relating to and about other people. You allow the creative content of the situation to unfold itself, free of any willful limitation you might place on it. Consequently, you yourself and everyone else involved are uplifted, as the creative energy of Life Itself unfolds and articulates its inner content.

True yoga is not standing on your head for twenty years. It's not holding your breath for eighty-four hours. It is not living in a cave and being in meditation for years and years. True yoga is dealing with tensions. In dealing with tensions every form of yoga is practiced, because dealing with tensions requires knowledge

and understanding (*jnana yoga*), real determination and love (*bhakti yoga*), and is an act of service to ourselves, our loved ones, and mankind (*karma yoga*). The release of tensions is the release of the flow of energy (*kundalini yoga*). This is a demonstration of the highest form of understanding (*kula yoga*). Releasing tensions is a demonstration of self-realization.

The Double-edged Power of Releasing Tensions

Dealing with tensions releases strong energies. As you release these strong energies, you will realize you have no idea what's going to happen – no idea. In fact,

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the more you think you have an idea what's going to happen, the more you're going to get punched in the nose when it doesn't go that way. Careful skill is required, and a great simplicity within yourself, because whatever level of tension you bring to a moment is going to structure and complicate all of the strong energies you relate to. As you grow you must understand the double-edged power of releasing tension, which creates at once the possibility of liberation and an opportunity to get the crap knocked out of you if you are in the wrong place.

In observing this double-edged nature, you begin to observe the complete unity of matter and energy; you see that all forms of expression – physical, biological, mental/emotional, all forms – are nothing but conscious energy. Moreover, there is an intimate unity between where you are within yourself and what happens around you. As you relate to these strong energies simply and openly, they enter into you and reorganize you completely. This process will literally reorganize the molecules that



you are; it will definitely take you places you never expected to go. Your openness allows that energy to structure its own information in you, to teach you and let you grow.

It is necessary, however, to have a very clear, conscious intention to grow. This has to be our fundamental dedication, because in the context of dealing with tensions, every kind of test to this commitment is going to emerge. And the tests are going to take on the forms that are the most difficult for you to deal with. Why? Because you yourself give form to every test, by your secret agendas, hidden sometimes even from you. You yourself, and no other. So when it makes your heart flutter and gives you a big kiss and then walks out the door, you can't complain. You did it to yourself.

As we learn to release these energies, they structure themselves within us. We become stronger and stronger; our presence becomes very powerful, and our understanding becomes sharp and clear. We are no longer struggling with problems, no longer dealing with limitations; even in the context of difficult situations, we no longer experience any kind of loss. No matter what the experience is, if we have dealt with it by opening to it, absorbing it, and expanding beyond it, the effect has to be extraordinarily good. In fact, the stronger and more powerful the change, very often the better it is – if we have the capacity to maintain our center as we relate to these various strong energies.

In the structure of Shaivism, dealing with tensions is known as *anavopaya*.

There are three levels of practice: *hatha yoga*, which begins to release the tensions, stresses, and strains that have imprinted in the muscles of your physical body; *pranayama*, which begins to release the tensions that are imprinted in your chemistry, in your mental and emotional patterns; and *kundalini yoga*, which is the release of the energy itself. Depending upon your needs, you should practice all three very diligently, and understand that whatever you do in the world, whatever the context for your pursuit of happiness and your pursuit of the divine (because happiness and the divine are the same), is fine. You are not here to be a great success as a doctor, lawyer, or Indian chief. You are here to learn to deal with tensions. It requires a profound act of surrender to stop defending yourself so that these strong energies can enter into you, restructure you, free you from the garbage, and expose you to the extraordinary creative content that is the essence of you and of your life. It's fantastic, truly unbelievable.

You Grow As Much As You Want to Grow

How much you grow is a direct function of your inner commitment and your conscious effort. Every single human being has the opportunity, by virtue of his or her intimate relationship with the same energy that has given rise to the entire universe, to attain and to live from the very highest state.

This is the only field in which there is the possibility of true egalitarianism, a real democracy. It has everything to do with



what you want, the depth to which you want it, and, as you encounter various tensions, the way in which you deal with those tensions and structure the energy that you release into the flow of your ordinary life. It is your deep longing that mobilizes your life force and the energies around you toward the particular end that you desire. Asking within yourself not only mobilizes those resources but also keeps you in touch with the management of those resources as this direction is articulated. It is a real discipline, with extraordinary consequences.

Finally, dealing with tensions is like dealing with bombs: every now and again one might blow up in your face. If it does, don't feel too bad about it, and don't go over and over it in your brain. Just be quiet and absorb that strong energy, too. If it takes you a couple of days to collect yourself, that is no problem. Just be quiet, open, and allow that strong energy to work in your life; then go forward. If you have this understanding, I guarantee you it is the hand of God that is at work in your life.

The Teacher As a Source of Tension

One of the most significant sources of tension you will encounter in your spiritual life manifests in the form of a human teacher. A human teacher is a tremendous source of tension for everybody, and this is fantastic, because it provides a tremendous opportunity. A human teacher is not really a personality, although it might have one. And it is not a behavioral event or a mission in the world. Rather, a teacher

is a demonstration of the multi-layered capability of the energy of Life Itself.

Our contact with a human teacher is at once an experience of energy within ourselves that heals us and a deeper challenge that is significant on three levels: personally, spiritually (in our deeper Self), and universally (in that it encompasses the whole of Life Itself). It is really a question of trust. We develop skill in dealing with tensions in order to develop an understanding of trust.

DEVELOPING TRUST

The essence of the student/teacher relationship is the discovery of a deep trust, a binding. It is a binding of love and *in* love. This trust continuously presents us with opportunities for dealing with tensions; it also provides us with the strength, understanding, and support to deal with them. The essence of a real teacher has little to do with whether or not the person eats only vegetables, is perfectly chaste, or wears only orange or purple (or nothing at all, as Nityananda did). The test of a true teacher is his or her appreciation of, and capacity to keep, a trust. The connection between a student and teacher is nothing but trust.

I remember fourteen years ago today, when Rudi's physical body disappeared from my life. Even though he was completely, in every sense, a spiritual presence in my life, that physical body was very reassuring. When it was gone, it was a great challenge to connect to and experience the profound trust that existed there, and to live from that trust in the exceedingly

difficult days that followed. It is only because of the sacredness of that trust that we can move through every kind of difficulty without losing our way, without becoming arrogant or egotistical or dishonest, without becoming crystallized. It is because of that trust that we continuously find the vigor and the enthusiasm to go forward to deal with tension again.

This question of trust cannot always be resolved immediately. But as we deal with tensions, it is trust that saves us from being caught in the event by identifying with it and becoming polarized. It is trust that continuously turns us back to look inside, to contemplate our own understanding. Finally, we begin to recognize that this energy has a will of its own, and as a matter

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of trust we accept the uncertainty. We allow it to reveal its highest inner content from within. By dealing with tensions carefully and with great skill, we learn to trust ourselves, we learn to trust other people, and we learn to trust life.

Trust is the Ultimate Act of Love

Trusting life is the ultimate act of renunciation, the ultimate expression of detachment. This simple, complete, and honest trust in life is the ultimate act of love. It is the ultimate personal sacrifice and the ultimate universal experience. It is the releasing of all form and, from deeply within ourselves, the complete acceptance of the presence of the divine in all its potential forms.

Moreover, our trust expresses a profound respect that slowly allows a genuine and universal love to permeate our minds, emotions, and physical lives. We become completely established in happiness, because in this state of trust nothing can cause us any harm. No longer is everything

that happens a question of winning or losing, gain or loss, getting or giving away. Rather, it is all simply, magnificently, Life Itself articulating its own inner nature to us, nourishing us and nurturing us in the understanding and the awareness of its infinite potentiality for change, its infinite capacity for happiness.

Trust lifts us beyond the limits of space. It removes the boundaries of time. It dissolves every kind of biological limitation and puts us in touch with an extraordinary power that was obscured within us by insecurity and the crystallization of this insecurity in the form of tensions. The more we learn to trust, the more we allow the presence of the divine to permeate our existence. This trust then becomes so powerful that it not only completes us in our own lives, but it begins to facilitate and promote the completion of others in their lives. It is remarkable and wonderful.

I want you to think about this, because it is extraordinarily important. No matter what you aspire to in your life, even if you don't care about spiritual work at all, this question of trust is central to your existence. Give it your careful attention, and at the very least, you will be free from fear.

UNDERSTANDING SERVICE

The flowering of trust manifests itself as service. Because we are completely established in a one-on-one participation in the essence of Life Itself – because we are established in the very highest state due to our complete trust in life – the loop closes in the form of service.

I am endlessly amazed at the superficial-

ity most people bring to their understanding of service. We think of shoveling the sidewalk or cleaning up after dinner as service. Maybe we think of bringing somebody a cup of tea as service. These can be called service, but we can also call them self-serving. Then there is a deeper kind of service that requires a real commitment of time and energy as we take on responsibility for the organization and development

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of a new event – that is also a form of service and it is very fine. But it is still not to the point. True service has to do with our ability to relate to the living essence of any circumstance or situation or human being; this is the real essence of serving.

From a simple place within us, free of our ego and agendas, free of our desires and will, we connect to the living essence of an event, tune into it, and by our attention begin to promote its awakening and un-

folding. The possibility to continually learn about this extraordinary vital power of Life Itself is always with you. This power is the source of your renewal. It is the source of physical health, mental and emotional well-being, and spiritual awareness.

We Serve Because We Need To

When we talk about service, we are not talking about being a nice person who spends a little time at the ashram sweeping the walk or doing a favor for somebody else. This is baloney. We serve, each of us, not because it's a nice thing to do, but because we *need* to serve, because it is an essential element of our spiritual development. Service is an opportunity to participate directly, one-on-one, in the energy of Life Itself. It is our opportunity to connect to and participate in that which nourishes and nurtures us and promotes this understanding within us. We do it because we need to, because any living event has the capacity to attract to itself whatever it needs at the appropriate time. Through service we break down our tensions, we break down misunderstandings, we participate in life and become increasingly skillful.

Then the renewal we experience in this process is not just like a change in the seasons that comes and goes. It's not like that. Each cycle of service that we go through, each activity that nurtures and changes us, is something that we have to understand very carefully and then build upon. Because we live a simple disciplined life, this energy structures itself within our understanding and becomes the ladder by which we ascend to the highest levels of spiritual awareness. No one else can do for you; you must do it for yourself.

We Serve Life, Not Other People

I want you to understand one thing very carefully. Every time you are relating from that deep place within yourself to that deep place in another person or in an event, you are not just serving a person, you are serving Life. Don't misunderstand and think that you are serving other people. You are *never* serving other people. Forget about other people. It has nothing to do with other people. It's nice if someone else benefits, but you cannot walk around with a general ledger in your head saying, "I did this for that one and that for this one and something else for somebody, and how dare they turn around and do this to me." It has nothing to do with people. It has everything to do with a one-on-one direct contact and participation in the subtlest and yet the most vital, powerful demonstration of Life Itself.

Begin to cultivate the only thing that we can truly have, and that is real knowl-



edge. Real knowledge is cultivated through service as we participate in every single event with a direct one-on-one awareness of the power of Life manifesting in this situation. It means that we have no ego, no judgment, no opinion to lay down on the whole thing; there is no will in it, simply an interest in participation and service. As we become more discriminating due to our experience, we will develop a deeper and deeper contact with and participation in Life that frees us from illusions about ourselves, illusions about relationships, illusions about purpose in life. And not only that, it's fun and exciting. This work (in Sanskrit, this *dharma*), is the only work you can do that will never become crystallized or boring. It is a work that is ever new, even as it is endlessly the same.

Relating From Love

Because we relate from that pure consciousness within ourself to that conscious energy within another person, more and more our awareness of the conscious energy is strengthened, and our attachment to the effects of that conscious energy (which are body, mind, emotions, and experiences) diminish. It's like this: Have you ever experienced love? And when you experienced that love, what was more important – a new stove? Defrosting the refrigerator? That experience is so extraordinary and powerful that the limits of your body become flexible, you feel that you are really getting inside somebody else. You forget what time it is, and anyway who cares? Your heart simply overflows.

The whole point of service and renewal is to find practical ways to recreate that experience every day without any emotional content or attachment. Then, because of our contact with this every day, slowly we stop worrying about the temporariness of this body, because we understand where it comes from and where it's going. Furthermore, we don't worry about other bodies either, because we see that there is an intimate unity all the time between this body and that body, a subtle connection that we want to pay more and more attention to. And we do that by serving other people. We do that by living our life with an attitude of service.

It doesn't dissolve all the issues – we still have to do our laundry and clean the house. But it allows those simple things to find their proper place in the totality of our lives; the simple day-to-day things do not dominate our existence and burden us. It turns our whole life, even the day-to-day things, into an extraordinary adventure, an extraordinary discovery of the power of Life Itself. What matters is your own

understanding and your intention, and then if you work at it a little bit, you'll be overwhelmed.

YOU GET TO CHOOSE

In cultivating this flow, in developing this service, we will encounter many tensions and we will have to deal with them carefully. But if we stop defending ourselves or thinking too much about our-

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selves, and instead think a lot about this flow, then getting through the tensions is pretty simple. It's when we tense up and start thinking, "What's going to happen to me?" that tensions start breaking bones.

Basically there are two kinds of life – a life of struggle, which is life for most

people, and a life of trust, which allows for infinite growth and permanent happiness. And you get to choose! This is your free will; you get to choose.

This trust is different from the notion of faith for a very simple reason. Our spiritual search begins with a re-awakening within us. It is a re-cognition of the power of Life Itself within us. Through grace and the presence of the teacher (which are the same), we open our eyes to that, and the result is simply amazing. We think of ourselves as a body with a mind, thoughts, desires, and so on, and suddenly to have all of that just cut through and to wake up to the fact that we're a pure dynamic event, we're energy – it is extraordinary.

Recognizing that energy, having contact with it, is the beginning of our understanding of trust. This is not something you take on faith, it's something you tangibly experience. In the same way that struggling leads to more and more struggle, so trusting leads to greater and greater trust. Whether or not you want to accept it into your life or deal with it is your challenge, but it's there and you cannot deny it.

Trust is the intermediate stage of renewal. I would like you to think about it. Close your eyes, take your attention inside and feel the power of life within you. Relax your mind and your thoughts. These are not your life. Relax your body. Your body is just the tip of the iceberg. Feel deeply within yourself. Relax, be quiet, open, and trust that creative power, allow it to expand within you and show you what it's all about. ■



RELATING TO THE TEACHER

by GENE BERNARDIN III

*Openness, trust, and
a lack of judgment are necessary
ingredients of our inner work.*



Our relationship with a teacher is a multi-level event. It is not only a relationship with a person, a personality, who has become a teacher, it is also a deep connection to Life Itself within us – the essence of what we are and the vitality in which the teacher exists. The quality of our relationship with the teacher is therefore expressed in the degree to which we are connected to our own inner Self. If we wish to grow, we must learn to cultivate the purity and the depth of this dual connection.

I have observed three important factors in my relationship with my teacher and in the connection we all have to Life: openness, trust, and a lack of judgment. The three are inter-connected, and all relate to our willingness to transcend our tensions.

Why do I speak of tensions when I talk about the teacher? Spiritual writings tend to speak of the teacher in flowery, fluffy terms, but this is misleading. Because the teacher is always going to promote our growth by encouraging us to face our tensions and transcend them, he (or she) will always be something of an irritant, a goad, to us. Whether by the mere presence of his energy or by his actions, our experience of the teacher will often be strong and challenging, not sweet and mellow. Of course, this is the way it must be. If you ride a bicycle, you know that it is the hard, sometimes painful uphill that develop your strength and capacity as a rider, not the coasting downhill. The same is true of our efforts to deepen our understanding and grow as human beings.

So, to feel tension in the presence of your teacher is not an unnatural occurrence; in fact, it is to be expected. It is not a sign that something is going wrong, it is sign that something is going right – our tensions are being engaged and challenged. This is important, because tensions are what keep us limited. Even when we know the right thing to do in a given situation, we may not do it because of some superficial attraction or repulsion. ("But I don't like to get up in the morning.") It is often our tensions, not our common sense, that dictate to us. To grow beyond these limitations, however, is a little bit scary and a lot of hard work: we know what we were and we know what we are, but we are not quite sure what we might become. Fear of the unknown and unwillingness to tackle hard work can become the resistance that prevents us from going any further.

The problem then becomes how to transcend our tensions, how to grow beyond our limitations. This process of growing is a dynamic event in which the factors of openness, trust, and lack of judgment interact with our practice of meditation and our relationship with a teacher.

*The lack of judgment
allows us to trust. Trust allows
us to open, and in a state of openness,
what tension is there?*

The lack (or suspension) of judgment allows us to trust. Trust allows us to open, and in a state of openness, what tension is there? In this process, the sincere wish to grow provides the fertile environment that enables all three to germinate and thrive; meditation refines our chemistry and provides a stability to our effort and a source from which we may draw strength; and the teacher acts as a catalyst, a facilitator, and a source of nourishment throughout. Once this process is started, the resulting understanding perpetuates and maintains the cycle on a continuously deeper and more refined level, until finally the distinction between student and teacher is lost in the very vitality of Life Itself.

Lack of Judgment

Judging others can be very subtle; often we are not even aware of doing it. It is a slow-creeping vine that can strangle our wish to grow and uproot the product of our past efforts. Judgment is usually an expression of our unwillingness to make a real effort. It is the knee-jerk defense of our inertia and limited understanding; it may not be much, but it is familiar and we are comfortable with it. To make the effort to go beyond our limitedness is hard work! It is more difficult than eating that cold plate of your least favorite vegetable when you were a kid. But only this effort delivers us from the prison we have built around ourselves and establishes the possibility for a purity to exist in our relationship with our teacher.

Trust

Swami Chetanananda has talked a lot recently about trust, so I have tried to examine more closely the role that it plays in my own practice. This trust is not a blind trust. Blind trust is actually harmful to our spiritual effort. To go along blindly, without trying to understand how our effort fits into our overall wish to grow, in no way promotes our development. We must participate in our own growth. Without a conscious concentration, what learning can take place in any endeavor, particularly one as subtle as spirituality?

The kind of trust we need is the trust that a scientist might have in his tools, his methods of experimentation, and his ability to grasp and to understand. How could a scientist even begin his research without this simple trust, or rely on any findings which might be touched by the prejudice of expectation (the seed of judgment)? Of course, he could not. It is this trust of a sci-

entist that we must bring to our spiritual work and cultivate in our relationship with the teacher – a trust that is completely devoid of expectation and preference, filled with an intense yet relaxed concentration, pregnant with infinite possibility.

That trust can only come about if we can refrain from the tendency to judge the actions and advice of our teacher. Compare a teacher to an expert in a field we want to learn about. We would obviously choose someone based on his or her reputation, experience, and demonstration of knowledge and understanding. Once a qualified person is chosen, we would be foolish to second-guess every statement; a certain suspension of judgment is called for so that we can learn.

If you hired an expert guide to help you climb a dangerous mountain, you would look for a guide with experience in reaching the peak and in guiding others to it. Once you found such a guide, would you argue with his choice of supplies or route? Not if you had reason to trust his (or her) skill. If we want to learn about spirituality, it is foolish not to trust the experience and insight of a teacher.

In spiritual work, it is trust that enables us to learn and grow. It is not necessary to *believe* in the wisdom or advice of the teacher in the slightest. It is necessary only to suspend our judgments so that we may see the result of our teacher's advice. Because a true teacher is completely in

tune with Life Itself, we cannot help but be uplifted by him.

Our contact with the teacher will always promote our highest best interest, and we should be willing to make the effort necessary to see this miracle for ourselves. If we find that we are short on trust, we should at least be willing to take a chance and temporarily suspend our judgments for the incredible possibility that exists.

Openness

Openness in spiritual terms is not a stagnant condition. Rather, it is a dynamic condition that requires constant, conscious effort. It is like the openness of a swinging door, in contrast to the openness of a window; the effort must be constant until it matures into a simple but intense awareness, unwavering and undivided. Openness, the fruition of a deep trust, and our ability to suspend judgments make transcending our tensions possible.

In that environment all learning takes place and all learning becomes possible.

Finally, if we are sincere and tenacious, we will come to understand that this relationship with a teacher is not different than the relationship we have with our own inner Self and the relationship we have with the very essence of Life. Experiencing this, we realize the complete unity of this trinity, which finally puts an end to the question of all relationships forever. ■



LEARNING TO RELEASE TENSION

by SHARON M. WARD

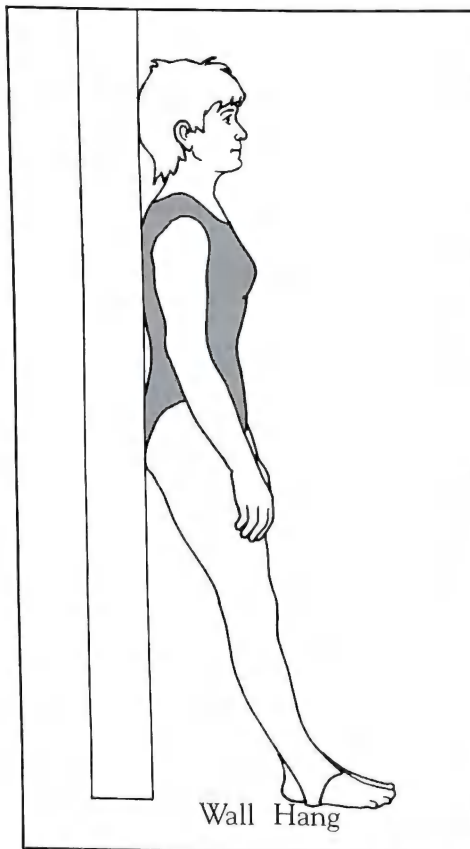
"John, you can't buy enlightenment... but you *can* earn it." Swamiji's words struck a chord that has reverberated in my mind for two weeks. Once again I was amazed by a simple yet powerful lesson. Some of us had been discussing implementing a new suggestion system, which includes a reward structure based on participation. John asked, half facetiously, whether the prize would be enlightenment. Swamiji sat quietly for a few moments and then conveyed this profound message: enlightenment is not for sale. No amount of money can buy it. However, you can definitely earn it.

Every one of us can earn enlightenment. It doesn't matter whether we are rich or poor, male or female, high school dropout or Ph.D. What does matter is that we take steps toward earning our freedom by resolving all of the issues, struggles, and tensions that confront us. It takes effort to let go of tensions. It takes effort to relax. Learning to release tensions is an important step toward having the deep meditation that leads to freedom.

Tensions accumulate simply by living. Every day the pressures of the world create tension within us. For me, just driving through Boston is an example of how ordinary life can make us crazy. Storrow Drive during rush hour puts me through the fight or flight response twenty times in eight minutes.

The phrase "fight or flight response" is a medical term for what happens to us when we feel we are in danger: we have a particular physiological reaction. Let's say a car is speeding directly into our path. What happens? Immediately, we increase our vigilance; we pay attention. We flush. We perspire. Next our attention is perked and our facial muscles tense. Within seconds our breath catches, becomes fast and shallow—we pant. Finally, our jaw clenches and our hands get cold and clammy.

All of this takes about six seconds. We are cued to a stimulus we perceive as a threat. Our attention perks, our pupils dilate, and our muscles tense to fight or run. Our breath catches, our heart rate and blood pressure increase; we release glucose for energy. Our body is alert and ready for action.



Wall Hang

This response is fine when we need to run or steer out of the path of a car. It is healthy. Our body gears up and we release it by either crashing into the car or getting out of its way. But problems arise when we can't release this energy, when we can't fight or fly. If we're in a traffic jam and we are very late for an important meeting, we can't fight or fly; if our boss calls us into his

(her) office, we usually can't run and we can't punch him in the nose.

Yet our bodies go through the same set of responses, whether we are running from an oncoming car or standing in front of our boss. When we can't discharge this built-up energy, all of that tension accumulates in our system... and the bad news is that this is just one kind of tension that exists inside us. It is our responsibility to consciously deal with every kind of tension every day. Meditation is the ultimate way of rejuvenating ourselves. Hatha helps to break down many of the physical and mental tensions that exist inside us and allows meditation to come more easily.

Hatha yoga can reduce stress. It can lower blood pressure, break down tension in the body, and generally *reverse* the fight or flight response. In the practice of hatha, the metabolism slows, the consumption of oxygen slows, and a relaxation response begins to happen. If you find that when you sit for meditation, your mind rambles, your neck hurts, your whole body aches, you feel physically and mentally rigid, consider practicing hatha as a way to demonstrate your seriousness about earning your spiritual growth.

Wall Hang

The wall hang is an excellent example of a pose that can reduce tension. It is a preparation for all the forward bends and a warmup for the upper and lower back, hips, and hamstrings. The wall hang has a calming effect, as it lowers blood pressure and induces a state of relaxation. It is simple, gentle, and relaxing. (If you have low blood pressure, you should not hold this pose very long. If you suffer from lower back pain you should use extreme care in approaching any hatha and should consult your physician or health consultant before attempting the wall hang.)

Stand with your back to the wall. Your tail bone (sacrum), shoulder blades (scapula), and back of your head (occiput) should rest against the wall. Feet are parallel to each other and hip's width apart. Heels are six to eight inches out from the wall.

Stand resting against the wall for a few moments. Watch your breath come in and go out. Your eyes may be open or closed as you wish. Tilt the pelvis under by gently pressing the lower back toward the wall.



Your chin should be parallel to the floor.

Think of your vertebrae as being individually attached to the wall. The movement of this pose is to *roll* the vertebrae down and off the wall – one at a time.

Begin by dropping the head forward so the chin comes toward the chest. Slowly roll the neck and then the upper back off of the wall. The arms and shoulders stay completely relaxed and limp. Move as slowly as you possibly can. The arms dangle in front of your body. Think *relax*. If you find a resistance point (a stiff point), slowly rise up and move through it again. Continue to breathe using the full yoga breath.

Certain parts of your back will feel that they move separately. Other parts will move as a unit, as if the vertebrae were fused. Notice which parts are flexible and which parts are stiff. Watch what your body is telling you about itself.

After your spine has left the wall, continue bending from the hips and letting

your arms hang freely. The hips will begin to slide up the wall as the stretch intensifies for the backs of the legs. If you feel strain behind the knees, bend them gently to release it. If you continue to feel discomfort, raise the torso slightly.

As in all hatha poses, *steady and comfortable* is the key. If you feel dizzy, slowly come up. Otherwise, stay in the down position for three to four full breaths. Allow the eyes to gaze towards the knees so that the top of the head points toward the floor. If the arms touch the floor, clasp the elbows so that your spine can stretch as much as possible.

After three or four breaths, prepare to come out of the pose. Rise up as slowly as you came down. Begin to inhale as you unroll the body and “reattach” the vertebrae to the wall – again, to the best of your ability, place one vertebra at a time against the wall. Come up slowly and gently. Contract your stomach and chest. This will help you feel the stretch along the back of the body. The head is the last part to rest on the wall. Close your eyes for a few moments, breathe, and absorb the relaxation. Remember the feeling of relaxation. Absorb it into every cell of your body.

The wall hang is an excellent pose to do before meditation – especially after a stressful day. If you take the seven to ten minutes to do it, you will take a great step towards relaxing your body and mind. This seven minute investment can make your meditation infinitely more fruitful because you won't be working through so many aches, pains, and tensions as you sit.

Shavasana

Another excellent tension reliever is *shavasana*. The object of *shavasana* is to remain motionless and keep the mind still. If we can become still and at the same time remain fully conscious, this conscious relaxation restores and refreshes body and mind. According to the *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*, this pose removes fatigue and gives rest to the mind.

Find a clean level surface that is quiet and pleasant. Lie flat on your back with your hands away from the hips, palms up. The entire spine should rest on the floor. Like the wall hang, the back of the head (occiput), the shoulder blades (scapulae) and the tailbone (sacrum) bear the weight of the body. The bottom points of the shoulder blades and the buttocks and hips should rest evenly on the floor to either side of the spine. Relax your face and head. The chin should be perpendicular to the ceiling and the bridge of the nose should run parallel to the ground. Close

your eyes, keep the heels apart and the toes pointed out. Extend your neck, keeping the chin level to relax the neck. Feel the warmth. Take a trip through each part of the body, examine it, consciously become aware of and relax each part. Breathe into any muscle groups that are tight and on the exhale, feel the tension release. Relax the eyes and behind the eyes. Relax the jaw, relax the face and scalp. Follow the breath as it comes in and



as it goes out. Observe the space between the in-breath and the out-breath. Let the mind merge into this space.

Breathe rhythmically. The inhale should not be deep, but normal. The exhale should be longer. There should be a pleasant feeling of heaviness, especially in the upper arms above the elbows and in the calves below the knee. There should be a feeling of deep mental peace. By letting go of oneself, one discovers one Self.

Come out of *shavasana* with a full body stretch, exhale, arms back to your sides. Sit up slowly or roll on your side to come up more slowly. Now you are ready to meditate.

Make the effort to relax and allow yourself to have a wonderful meditation. You'll find enormous benefits in making this effort. You will be able to feel a tremendous amount more when you have taken the time to relax. Earning your enlightenment costs so little when compared to the alternatives. ■

WELLNESS

The Spiritual Dimension

by AURELIA NAVARRO

Recently the Institute sponsored a "Wellness Weekend" at Martha's Vineyard, taught by hatha and relaxation instructor Sharon M. Ward and physicians Rachel Brooks, Duncan Soule, and Arlin Brown. Preparing for this course created an opportunity to re-examine our view of the role of spirituality in health and to compare this view to that of traditional medicine. This article is the result of informal interviews with the Wellness Weekend physicians that began with their responses to an article in the new *American Journal of Health Promotion*. The centerpiece of the journal's first issue was an article written by Larry Chapman, M.P.H., entitled "Spiritual Health: A Component Missing from Health Promotion." It was gratifying to see an acknowledgment of the strong role of spirituality in health or wellness, and the premise of that article was the starting point for our conversations.

The Spirit in Traditional Medicine

Traditional medicine has been slow to encompass the holistic view. It is as though the progress of medical science has had to complete a pendulum swing into the severest degree of specialization before the swing could shift toward a gradual re-connecting of parts into a holistic vision. Dr. Duncan Soule talked about that progression, and noted the hard-to-breach line that separates mechanical models from the models that include mind and/or spirit.

In this context, the coalescence of the multidisciplinary field of health promotion is a large step toward an integrated approach to health, and the publication of the fledgling discipline's own journal an important demonstration of credibility.

Article on Spiritual Health

It is Mr. Chapman's assertion that spirituality is a vital component in any wellness program, and he offers a definition



*Is mainstream
medicine ready to acknowl-
edge the role of the inner
spirit in health and wellness?
Institute physicians
respond to a recent journal
article with cautious
optimism.*

of optimal spiritual health. He also raises a key question when he compares medicine's reductionist and mechanistic view of the human condition with the much broader and less measurable "variables (and vagaries) of the human condition." He challenges the health promotion field to "develop and refine its own 'soul' and stretch beyond the narrow parameters of the science-base of medicine."

This constitutes a significant further step on the continuum between total reductionism and total holism, although from a spiritual point of view it remains limited. For instance, Mr. Chapman concludes with: "Spiritual health issues need to be included in a balanced approach to health promotion in order for the larger issues such as peace, love, joy, contentment, caring and other important dimensions of the human condition to be more effectively addressed in the enhancement of quality as well as the quantity of human life." Certainly no one can quarrel with the spirit of this statement, yet, as Dr. Arlin Brown says, "I agree in general, but a lot is omitted — there are even larger issues!"

To a spiritual student, especially of a pure monistic system such as Kashmir Shaivism, even the best intentioned wellness programs tend to look more like secular humanism than spirituality. This is certainly not due to any lack of good will or good intention on the part of the providers, but rather due to a lack of understanding. Look at the definition of optimal spiritual health posed by Mr. Chapman:

"Optimal spiritual health may be considered as the ability to develop our spiritual nature to its fullest potential. This would include our ability to discover and articulate our own basic purpose in life, learn how to experience love, joy, peace, and fulfillment, and how to help ourselves and others achieve their full potential."

The state he is defining, while admirable, is still firmly earth-bound. All of these

Rachel Brooks & Duncan Soule specialize in Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation; Arlin Brown's specialty is Psychiatry.

things are encompassed by spirituality, but there is a further dimension that is hard to describe – an experience, a state, a process – that is true health.

Definition of Health/Wellness

In our talks, none of the doctors saw any need to distinguish between “health” and “wellness” – the important point is to realize that you can be *well* even in the presence of physical complications – you can have a broken arm and still be well, you can have rheumatoid arthritis and still be well. Health can express itself despite the limitations of body and mind.

Wellness, then, is not necessarily measurable or quantifiable by existing technologies. Yet, as Dr. Rachel Brooks says, it is “a palpable, recognizable quality – that certain spark, certain vitality – you just *know* it. It is a common, reliable experience.” Dr. Brown defines the term by its obverse: when health is not present, it is as if “the lights are on, but nobody’s home.”

Further, all three use the term “balance” – a balance of the different spheres of life: physical, mental, emotional, social, spiritual, a dynamic equilibrium of forces. In Dr. Brooks’s words: “Health is always striving to express itself – it is a dynamic state, a dynamic process.”

The Role of the Patient

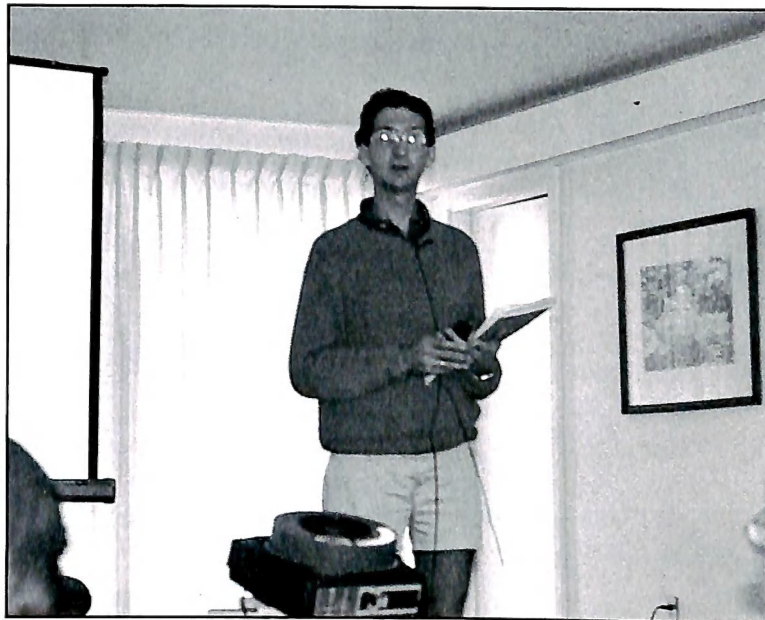
What is the role of the patient in this dynamic process? All agree with Dr. Duncan Soule that the first and indispensable step is to take responsibility for your own health. How you do this is an individual matter; but whatever the mechanism, the result is a shift in readiness, a shift in awareness and values, that allows the individual to see alternatives, to see choices. Dr. Brown referred to the addiction model in which the opening high level of denial is broken through by confrontation. For most of us, he smilingly notes, daily life is confrontation enough. It is at this stage of increased awareness that the alternatives offered by the wellness movement are useful. It is also the time when you need to call on the extra inner resources of the spirit.

The good news is that dramatic changes are possible (even in hardcore, anti-social users, reports Dr. Brown), once the desire to change is there. It is as if once the

patient’s own vitality is contacted and amplified, anything is possible.

Role of the Physician

This is the heart of the matter for these physicians: contacting and encouraging



Dr. Duncan Soule lectures at the Wellness Weekend.

that subtle and elusive inner vitality in the individual and then just getting out of the way. Dr. Brooks describes it this way: “It is the provider’s firm intention to recognize health that mobilizes the health within the person. In a way, you are just bringing health to the forefront of their awareness so their own mechanism can say: ‘Oh, yes, health’ – it is a moment of recognition.”

The spiritually oriented provider, adds Dr. Brown, helps the patient relate to something inside that has helped before: maybe in response to the ocean, or nature, or some moment of high emotion, you had a feeling of opening in your heart. This is a simple experience that everyone has had and can relate to.

If we define health as “that certain vitality,” then health is never absent in life, although it can be obstructed or restrained. Dr. Brooks speaks of a pattern in her work with patients in which they improve slowly over time, yet there is often a specific moment when you can feel (and they can feel) that vitality start manifesting again.

It Is Not a Matter of Belief

Spirituality is not synonymous with religion. There is nothing you must believe in; spirituality encompasses all belief systems and deals with each individual’s personal highest reality. Dr. Brown describes it as the difference between looking to *the* highest power and looking to *your* highest power.

This distinction is important because it means that there is a spiritual aspect to *everyone’s* health – you don’t have to believe in it, it is simply there: if everyone has a spirit, everyone has a spiritual dimension. It is not necessary to name it, it is not even necessary to talk about it directly, certainly it is not necessary to *believe* in it (do you believe in your kidneys?). Again, Dr. Brooks: “There need be no discussion of spirituality for it to be enormously present in the healing process and to continually manifest as the state of health.”

Dr. Brown cites the enduring success of the Alcoholics Anonymous program in controlling addiction as an example of using the spiritual aspect to encourage health. He notes that even if patients think it’s all hogwash, they can feel if someone “has it” and they want it, too. Dr. Brown’s advice to such patients is not to worry about what to call it, but just to spend time with the people that “have it” and see what happens.

For many people, the problem with this model is that it is *too* simple, *too* subtle. If health is always striving to express itself, they ask, where do diseases come from? Certainly we can’t deny that medical problems, body/mind breakdowns, do occur. Is the answer simply to ignore them and “think healthy”?

Of course, the answer to that is *no* – traditional, holistic, and wellness interventions all have their place and can complement each other. The answer really lies in the more subtle realm of “who/what am I really?” If your answer is “I am this body,” then you have some real problems in store, because regardless of the purity of your lifestyle and the perfection of your preventive maintenance program, “this body” is going to break down – we are all going to die of *something*. So again, we come back to balance. Yes, we need to repair and maintain our physical mechanism in some simple, regular ways. In the presence of physical disease, we can turn to traditional remedies as well as alternative approaches, but if our goal is a truly spiritual understanding, we will begin to look deeper and define health more broadly. We will break out of the limited understanding of body, and even of body/mind, into the clear light of the Self. ■

WELLNESS RESOURCES from RUDRA PRESS

by NANETTE REDMOND

The books and tapes listed below describe the process of identifying and dealing with the stress in our lives. In some, doctors give us an accounting of physiological conditions, such as hypertension, fatigue, and headache, that can be cured in a surprisingly simple way. Others explore the many techniques to reduce the effects of stress. Several books and tapes deal with hatha yoga, a wonderful way to improve health and well-being regardless of age or physical condition.

The key to success lies in our determination to move from the role of victim to the role of hero. After we get through the phase of labeling and assigning blame for our problems, we finally discover that the responsibility for solutions exists in only one place – inside ourselves. Stress and pain never disappear completely, but with consistent effort we gain the ability to accept what we must, change what we can, and ultimately transcend it all. Slowly (sometimes it seems *very* slowly) we learn to live from that sense of deep inner joy that Swamiji so often expresses.

The Relaxation and Stress Reduction Workbook

Davis, Eshelman, McKay
Paperback \$12.50

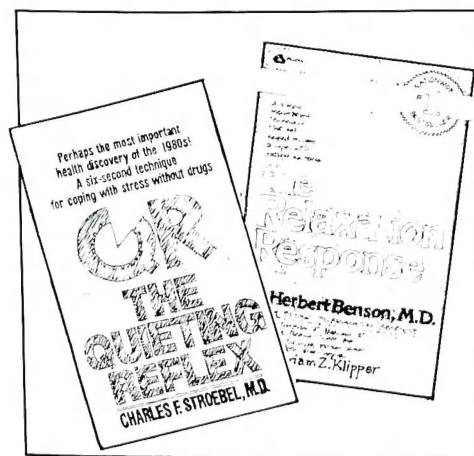
Full of useful information you can apply *today*, this book is not only an excellent compendium of the major stress reduction techniques, but also a workbook that involves you, through simple step-by-step instructions, in overcoming the effects of stress on your body, mind, and spirit. The authors emphasize that intellectual understanding is not enough: "Intellectual understanding of most techniques is of little

value, unless accompanied by first-hand experience."

Topics include progressive relaxation, meditation, coping skills and assertiveness training, time management, biofeedback, exercise, and nutrition.

The Relaxation Response

Herbert Benson, M.D.
Paperback \$3.95



Dr. Benson examines the causes and physiological effects of stress in layman's terms and describes the research that led to his discovery of the "relaxation response." To the surprise of many in the medical community, this scientifically proven technique for combatting stress consists of instruction in a simple meditation practice. The author describes meditative practices throughout the ages which led to the four basic steps included in the relaxation response technique. We also learn of the valuable physiological and emotional changes experienced by many patients suffering from stress-triggered

illnesses such as hypertension. This book is a delightful study of age-old wisdom finding its place in the twentieth century.

Beyond the Relaxation Response

Herbert Benson, M.D.
Paperback \$3.95

The author's continuing research led him to examine the power of personal belief or the "faith factor." Dr. Benson describes the premise for his study as follows: "Our personal powers and potential for well-being are shaped by the negative or positive ways we think . . . What we perceive or believe to be real has a more powerful effect than external reality." Benson discusses medical phenomena such as false pregnancy and the placebo effect and describes his journey to the Himalayas to study the physiological effects of meditation on Tibetan monks.

Benson concludes: "It is difficult to place definite limits on the physical and mental powers of those who hold profound beliefs." Readers are encouraged to use the power of the faith factor to enhance the benefits of the relaxation response.

QR: The Quietening Reflex

Charles F. Stroebel, M.D.
Paperback \$3.50

In his work with stress-related illnesses, Dr. Stroebel found a need for a pleasant, result-producing technique that "would be carried into the real world outside the training situation on a permanent basis." His concern stemmed from the low rate of compliance over time in patients who used techniques such as the relaxation response.

His method of stress reduction focuses on counteracting the fight or flight response *at the moment of stress*. Dr. Stroebel's four steps to counteract the physiological stress response can be carried out in six seconds. Follow the step-by-step instructions to activate the quieting reflex until it becomes an automatic response.

Lilias! Alive with Yoga

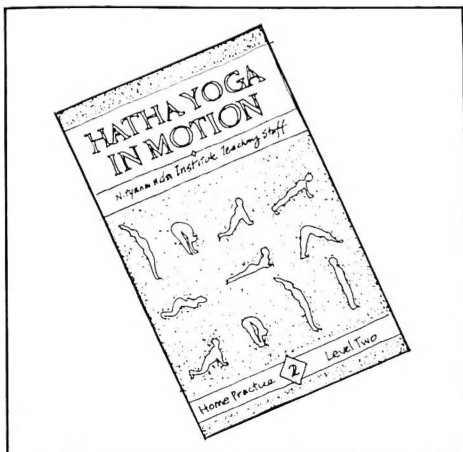
Lilias Folan
Video Tape (VHS or Beta) \$39.95

This instructional video program consists of two 30-minute hatha yoga classes. The program is particularly effective for beginners and those of us who are a little out of shape. Lilias carefully guides the student through the essential yoga postures, emphasizing safety and comfort. Everyone can benefit from a yoga exercise and relaxation program and Lilias cheerfully leads us to a pleasurable and beneficial practice.

Hatha Yoga in Motion Level 1 and Level 2

Nityananda Institute
Audio Tapes plus Guide \$9.95 each

The Institute's hatha yoga teachers have developed a series of audio tapes to help students establish a daily yoga practice outside of a structured class. Each tape



consists of two 30-minute classes that take you carefully from warm-up to cool-down. Both tapes feature *vinyasa*, a graduated series of movements-with-breath that lead the student to a sense of ease and strength while developing a meditative understanding of hatha yoga.

The Level 1 tape includes the *pavanmuktasan* (joint-loosening) series, which is excellent preparation for sitting in meditation. Side 2 guides the student through the *vrksansan* (palm tree) *vinyasa*, a series of standing movements that give a complete body stretch.

The Level 2 tape, designed for intermediate yoga students, continues the *vinyasa* practice. Side 1 focuses on the sun salutation series, with appropriate warm-up and cool-down. Side 2 focuses on the *dandasana* *vinyasa* (stick series) of seated stretches. Each ends with a deep relaxation pose that is essential to allow you to absorb the work and the benefits of your daily yoga practice.

Includes a fold-out illustrated guide to the poses.

Religiousness in Yoga

T.K.V. Desikachar
Paperback \$12.50

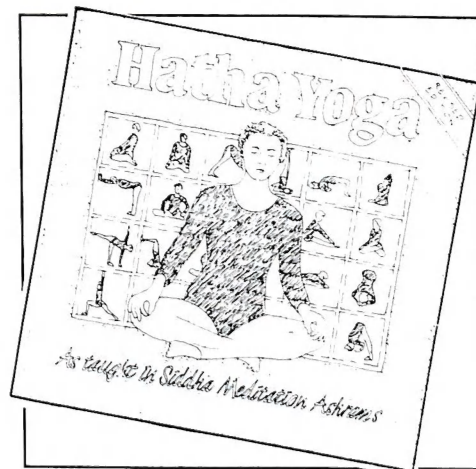
One of the few reliable discussions of *vinyasa* in print, this book presents invaluable instruction on both the theory and practice of yoga that is of particular interest to continuing students. Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras* form the basis for the discussion of theory. The volume also carefully and simply explains the principles of practice,

practice planning, *vinyasa*, and improvisation in *asana*, giving many examples and illustrations of pose and counterpose and beneficial combinations of *asanas*. The theory and practice of *pranayama* are also discussed. The material is adapted from a month-long intensive course given at Colgate University by Mr. Desikachar, who is the son and foremost student of the revered Krishnamacharya.

The Concise Light on Yoga

B.K.S. Iyengar
Paperback \$8.95

This volume includes a comprehensive introduction to the eight stages of classical hatha yoga practice which lead the student from purely physical *asana* practice to *samadhi* or complete union with the Self. This excellent reference work and instructional guide includes 150 photographs and clear, highly detailed descriptions of 57 *asanas* and *pranayamas*. Iyengar includes instruction in technique, hints and cautions, and effects of each *asana* as well as suggested courses for daily practice.



Hatha Yoga for Meditators

SYDA Foundation
Paperback \$8.00

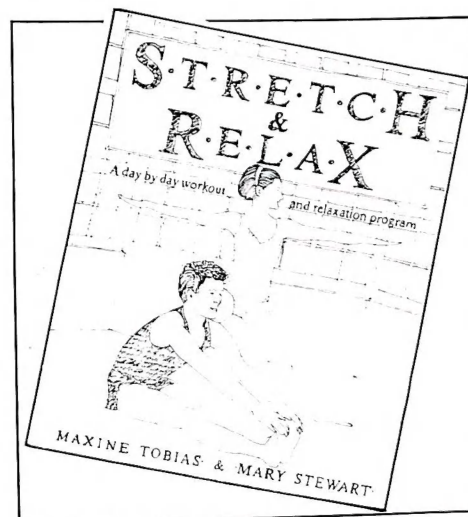
This easy-to-follow spiral bound manual is an effective practice guide especially helpful for daily practice at home. This book includes clear instructions and illustrations for a complete range of postures, the sun salutation, as well as relaxation and breathing exercises and meditation postures. The focus of practice is meditation in action – turning our gaze inward and quieting the mind as we move and breathe.

Light on Pranayama

B.K.S. Iyengar
Paperback \$11.95

Pranayama (the science of breath) is the heart of yoga practice. The science of

breath control explores the intimate relationship between the body and the mind. Iyengar explains that *pranayama* requires patient and cautious effort in order to master this subtle and difficult art. This book explores the theory, art, and techniques of *pranayama* and introduces meditation and relaxation to yoga students. An excellent reference book.



ILLUSTRATIONS BY BILL DENNIS

Stretch and Relax

Tobias and Stewart
Paperback \$12.95

A beautifully illustrated volume offering day-by-day workout and relaxation programs based on the yoga training of B.K.S. Iyengar. The authors encourage us to use a graduated system of stretching to release tensions and improve health, no matter what shape we are in. They also emphasize that daily practice is the key to reducing fatigue, as well as developing stamina and overall flexibility. Instruction includes five different 20-minute programs for daily use according to your age and physical ability. Other chapters address relieving stiffness and stress, relaxation, and a program of body stretches for pregnancy and early motherhood.

Rest, Relax and Sleep

Lilias Folan
Audio Tape and Booklet \$11.98

This ten-week audio course developed by Lilias for people with sleeping problems introduces a series of progressive relaxation techniques, breathing and visualization exercises, and "sleep stretches." The course emphasizes examining the source of poor sleep habits and takes the listener through a graduated learning program of conscious relaxation techniques to be used at any time of the day. Includes an illustrated instructional booklet.



THE WORLD/tensions

Tensions are inherent in everything.
They are not in themselves bad things.

They are part of life's beauty.
A person skilled in the art of life
works with the tensions in people
and circumstances,
and molds from them
extraordinary creative activity.

SWAMI CHETANANANDA

Excerpted from
Songs From the Center of the Well

UPCOMING 1987 CAMBRIDGE WEEKEND RETREATS

with
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